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SUBJECT: DRC: THE WORLD IS WATCHING

¶1. (SBU) The extraordinary visit of three United Nations (UN) agency heads to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) the week of February 28 underscored the urgent need for support for the nation as it prepares for its first democratic elections in 40 years, and for the post-transition government that will be elected. UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres, Director of the UN World Food Program James Morris, and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Director Ann M. Veneman together visited the DRC and deplored the "inadequate" commitment of the international community to the Great Lakes compared to other regions of the world.

¶2. (SBU) Additionally, the United Nations released this month a plan to bridge the gap between humanitarian action and long-term development programs in the DRC. Titled "DRC: Action Plan for a Neglected Catastrophe," the document lists six programs to sustain democratization and recovery in the post-election period: small arms and mine action, rule of law, social services (education, healthcare), rural recovery, national dialogue, and coordination (local government capacity). The humanitarian community estimates funding needs at \$681 million.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: Along with other recent high-level visits (from, among others, UN Deputy Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Marie Guehenno, the king of Morocco, European Commissioner Louis Michel, and several Belgian ministers including the Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel De Gucht and Minister of Defense Andre Flahaut), the UN agency heads reiterated the message that elections are just the first step in bringing political and economic stability to the DRC. The post-transition government will face huge challenges, and the international community's support is essential. End comment.
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